

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Final Official Action provided. Upon entry of the present paper, the drawings and claims 1, 5, 7, 10 and 25 will have been amended, claim 11 will have been canceled, and claims 4, 8 and 13 will remain withdrawn from consideration, with claims 1-10, 12-14 and 25 pending in the present application. With respect to non-elected claims 4, 8 and 13, Applicants request rejoinder of these claims, since they are respectively dependent from independent claims 1, 5 and 10, which are allowable for reasons further discussed hereinbelow.

The Examiner has objected to the drawings, requesting that the spring mount that radially inwardly projects between the first and second inner diameters must be shown or the features canceled from the claim. In this regard, Applicants have canceled claim 11, and thus respectfully request withdrawal of this objection. The Examiner has further objected to Figs. 1, 2A and 2B, requiring a "prior art" legend, and has objected to Figs. 3, 4, 5B, 6 and 10, requiring the cross hatching of the spring to be shown. In compliance with the Examiner's objection, Applicants have added a "prior art" legend to Figs. 1, 2A and 2B, and has provided the spring in crosshatching in Figs. 3, 4, 5B, 6 and 10. With respect to new Replacement Figs. 3, 4, 5B, 6 and 10, these figures replace those figures submitted in the Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 filed on November 23, 2005, and show the "non-solid" cross section of element 160, in accordance with the Advisory Action of December 9, 2005. No new matter has been added. Applicants thus respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection to the drawings.

The Examiner has objected to claim 25 because of informalities, requiring that requiring that "projection" be changed to ---spring support--- in claim 25. In compliance with the Examiner's requirement and without agreeing with the propriety of the Examiner's objection, Applicants have amended this claim to address this informality solely to expedite the prosecution of the present application. It is thus respectfully requested that the Examiner withdraw this objection.

With respect to Applicants' Amendment filed on June 15, 2005, the Examiner has found Applicants' arguments unpersuasive and has rejected claims 1-3 and 25 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,020,522 to SEGUIN, finding that this reference teaches all limitations of these claims.

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejection, and note that the applied SEGUIN reference fails to teach or suggest at least the claimed spring configured to support a rod such that the rod elastically moves back and forth, as claimed in independent claim 1, or supporting, via the spring, a rod such that the rod elastically moves back and forth, as claimed in independent claim 25. To the contrary, Applicants note that SEGUIN merely discloses a gasket 9 having a bolt 1 penetrating therethrough. While Applicants' respectfully disagree with the Examiner's determination that the broadest reasonable interpretation of the gasket to comprise a spring, because under the Examiner's logic, virtually any substance in existence would be a spring, since virtually any substance has a degree of resiliency (including but not limited to glass, plastic, stone and metal), thereby eviscerating the meaning of "spring," Applicants have nonetheless amended claims 1 and 25 to respectively recite --- a spring configured to support a rod such that the rod elastically

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moves back and forth--- and --- supporting, via the spring, a rod such that the rod elastically moves back and forth ---without agreeing with the propriety of the Examiner's rejection and solely to expedite the prosecution of the present application.

The Examiner has rejected claims 10 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,309,524 to WOODRUFF, and has rejected claims 10-12 and 14 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,333,434 to BRUNAIS. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections, and note that the applied WOODRUFF and BERNAIS references each have *three* inner diameters, the second diameter being smaller than the first, and a third inner diameter being smaller than the second, and the spring support being formed between the second inner diameter and the third inner diameter, while the invention of independent claim 10 is limited to two inner diameters, with the spring mount being positioned at a region of said spring support located between the first inner diameter and the second inner diameter.

Absent a disclosure in a single reference of each and every element recited in a claim, a *prima facie* case of anticipation cannot be made under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Since the applied references fail to disclose each and every element recited in independent claims 1, 10 and 25 and the claims dependent from claims 1 and 10, these claims are not anticipated thereby. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

With respect to the Examiner's rejection of dependent claims 2-3, 12 and 14, Applicants submit that these claims are dependent from one of allowable independent claims 1 and 10, which are allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Thus, these

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dependent claims are also allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Further, all dependent claims set forth a further combination of elements neither taught nor disclosed by any of the applied references.

The Examiner has rejected claims 5-7 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over SEGUIN in view of SERGENT. Specifically, the Examiner has found that SEGUIN teaches all of the limitations of these claims except the fixation holes penetratingly formed through the coupling ring; however, the Examiner has found that SERGENT teaches such a limitation, and concludes that it would have been obvious to combine this feature with the invention of SEGUIN. Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejection and note that none of the applied references teach or suggest a spring configured to support a rod such that the rod elastically moves back and forth, as recited in claim 5. Similar to the above, while Applicants' respectfully disagree with the Examiner's determination that the broadest reasonable interpretation of the gasket to include a spring, Applicants have nonetheless amended claim 5 to recite ---spring configured to support a rod such that the rod elastically moves back and forth--- without agreeing with the propriety of the Examiner's rejection and solely to expedite the prosecution of the present application.

With respect to the Examiner's rejection of dependent claims 6-7 and 9, Applicants submit that these claims are dependent from independent claim 5, which is allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Thus, these dependent claims are also allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*. Further, all dependent claims set forth a further combination of elements neither taught nor disclosed by any of the applied references.

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Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that each and every pending claim of the present application meets the requirements for patentability at least under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103, and respectfully requests the Examiner to indicate the allowance of each and every pending claim in the present application.

Although the status of the application is after final rejection, Applicants submit that entry of the amendment is proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. In particular, Applicants believe that, contrary to the Examiner's indication, no new issues are being presented that would require an additional search. It is submitted that the Examiner has already searched and considered the claim limitations. The Examiner is respectfully requested to exercise his discretion in this regard.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone, or in any proper combination thereof, discloses or suggests the present invention, and in further view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. Applicants further note that the currently-amended claimed features argued as deficient in the prior art, should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

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Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

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